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BRAGG'S INVASION OF KENTUCKY: A CAMPAIGN ANALYSIS

by

Louis G. Burgess

Major, United States Army

A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Operations Department (Joint Maritime Operations).

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College, the Department of the Navy, or the Department of the Army.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The battles of Iuka, Mississippi, Corinth, Mississippi and Perryville, Kentucky are not well known to the casual reader of Civil War history. The reason for this is the primary focus of persons studying the Civil War always seem to be on operations in the East, specifically Virginia. Lee, Longstreet, "Stonewall" Jackson, and JEB Stuart are names that are familiar to many. While those of Bragg, Van Dorn, Morgan and Kirby Smith are less familiar. Bragg's modern claim to fame may be in having a fort in North Carolina named after him. But it was Bragg and Kirby Smith, with help from Van Dorn, who conducted the first of the three Confederate invasions of the North.

Lee's first invasion of Maryland in September 1862 ended in failure at Antietam, in less than three weeks. Lee's second short lived invasion ended less than a year later at Gettysburg. But, Bragg's invasion was the first, preceding Lee's first effort by almost three weeks. Like the other two invasions of the North, Bragg's ended in failure, after less than two months. The factors contributing to the failure of Bragg's invasion in 1862 are easily understood and the lessons learned are still applicable today.

Four lessons learned can be derived from the campaign planning and execution of the invasion of Kentucky in 1862.

There was a failure by the head of the Confederate government to provide strategic guidance. Second, both Jefferson Davis and Bragg failed to establish a clear chain of command in the Western Theater. Third, the means chosen by Bragg to accomplish his goals were not adequate. Finally, General Bragg, as the ranking Confederate general in the West, failed to develop his plan in a timely, comprehensive manner. He constantly made major changes to the plan based on his subordinates uncoordinated activities. Modern military planners, through the luxury of history, can easily see the mistakes made by our predecessors. We must take the time to learn through the mistakes of others, in order to avoid repeating them.

CHAPTER II

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Numerous Confederate defeats during the first part of 1862 helped set the stage for Bragg's invasion of the North. A Confederate loss in January at Mill's Spring, Kentucky represented "the first break in the Confederate defense line, which ran from Cumberland Gap to Columbus on the Mississippi."[1] This was followed by a series of battles along the Tennessee, Cumberland, and Mississippi Rivers that would feature the emergence of the generals that would lead the North to eventual victory. Within five days in February, General U.S. Grant captured Fort Henry on the Tennessee River and Fort Donelson on the Cumberland River.

The loss of these forts opened the way for Union troops to strike deep into the South. "The disastrous news of Donelson's fall shook the Confederacy. Jefferson Davis was greatly dispirited. It was so far the South's worst defeat...Kentucky seemed irretrievably lost. The way to Nashville was open for Union troops."[2] And in fact, one day after Jefferson Davis' official inauguration, General Albert Sidney Johnston was forced to evacuate Nashville. Not only was Nashville the first Confederate state capital to fall, it was also an important industrial center. "Nashville, with its great depository of military supplies and railroads, occupied the importance in the

West that Richmond did in the East, and its loss shocked the Southern people."[3] Just as Confederate defenses east of the Mississippi collapsed in February, the defenses west of the river caved in in March. A stunning loss by numerically superior Confederate troops, led by General Earl Van Dorn, at Pea Ridge, Arkansas resulted in the permanent loss of Missouri and was the last offensive in the Trans-Mississippi Theater. Confederate losses at Shiloh and Island Number 10 followed in April. Also lost at Shiloh was General A.S. Johnston, who bled to death after being shot in the leg. After Johnston's loss, General P.T. Beauregard assumed command of the Confederate army.

After the defeat and retreat from Shiloh, Beauregard concentrated his forces at Corinth, Mississippi. Corinth was another crucial strategic point, sitting astride the railroad between Memphis and Chattanooga. Despite its importance ("If defeated here," wrote Beauregard two weeks after Shiloh, "we lose the whole Mississippi Valley and probably our whole cause."[4]) Beauregard withdrew his army in order to save his army by preventing a siege. The withdrawal was conducted with great skill and stealth and was considered by Beauregard to be "equivalent to a great victory."[5] Jefferson Davis did not take the loss of Corinth as a "great victory" and sacked Beauregard as commander of the Confederate Army of Mississippi, replacing him with General Braxton Bragg in mid-July 1862.

Outside the Western theater of operations other forces were contributing to the rising gloom in the confederacy. The blockade of Southern seaports was starting to have an effect,

restricting essential supplies notably ammunition. However, in the eyes of the Confederates, the greatest danger was the slow advance of the Army of the Potomac towards the Confederate capital of Richmond. The Union Peninsula Campaign, April-May 1862, was first slowed by the exploits of "Stonewall" Jackson in the Shenandoah Valley. It was then brought to a halt in the aftermath of the Seven Days' Battle. This strategic Southern victory occurred at the same time that Bragg was taking over in the West. It stopped the string of Southern losses, caused the evacuation of the Northern army, and brought new hope to the Confederacy.

Hope in Confederate success reached its zenith in July 1862. It was not only the recent successes in Virginia, where the threatening Union army had been driven away from Richmond that caused this hope. There had been a couple ships made in England and commissioned in the Confederate Navy that had broken through the Union blockade and one ship, the CSS Alabama, had successfully attacked Union gunboats. Most importantly, there were indications that Great Britain would lead several other European nations in the recognition of the Confederacy as a separate nation. It was thought that one significant victory would bring this recognition. These weeks of anticipation and hope in the South have been called the "golden moment of the Confederacy."[6] It was in this optimistic period that General Braxton Bragg, Commander of the Western Department and the Army of Mississippi, commenced his campaign planning.

CHAPTER III

BRAGG'S PLAN

The political objectives of the Confederate government in the summer of 1862 were to gain European recognition of the Confederacy, draw the border states of Maryland and Kentucky to the South, demonstrate the will of the Southern people, and to affect the Northern elections in the fall.

Given these objectives, it would seem reasonable that Jefferson Davis would have directed the two invasions of the North that occurred in the late summer. But this was not the case. The plans for invasion were developed independently and without any attempts at coordination.

The enemy situation facing Bragg, when he took command of the Western Department, was favorable to the Confederates. Although Halleck had over 100,000 men when he occupied Corinth at the end of May, he had to disperse them in order to hold the territory that had been gained. "Halleck therefore divided the Army of the Tennessee under Grant into several fragments for occupation and railroad-repair duties, detached a division to reinforce Union troops confronting a new threat in Arkansas, and ordered the 40,000 men in the Army of the Ohio under Buell to move against Chattanooga."[1] Chattanooga was a key rail terminal for the South and was vital for their resupply of the Eastern states. The Union armies also depended on the railroads

for their resupply. Their main centers for resupply being Nashville and Louisville.

The friendly situation was confused by the command relationships that had developed. Early in the war the entire western theater had been under the command of Sidney Johnston. But after his death, and the subsequent command changes, a new structure emerged. In what has been called "one of Davis's serious early mistakes"[2] he organized the departmental system with each department reporting direct to himself. When Bragg assumed command, he thought that he had control over all troops in the West. However, without his knowledge, General Kirby Smith had been given the Department of Eastern Tennessee and General Van Dorn was in charge of the Trans-Mississippi Department. Both men were able to deal with Richmond directly concerning war matters and neither was obligated to inform Bragg of their plans. When Bragg planned his campaign he assumed he would command both men and their armies in his invasion of the North.

The disposition of troops available to Bragg was: Van Dorn with 16,000, vicinity Vicksburg; Price with 16,000 and his own army of 40,000, located vicinity Tupelo, Mississippi. Kirby Smith with 18,000 was based out of Knoxville, Kentucky.

The original impetus of Bragg's invasion plans is not clear. When Beauregard relinquished the command to Bragg, he "advised grand offensive plans in Tennessee, Kentucky, and Ohio."[3] The Secretary of War, in correspondence outlining the extent of his department, also approved offensive action, urging Bragg to "strike the moment an opportunity offers."[4]

There were definite military and political reasons to initiate an offensive. A military factor was the successful cavalry raids conducted by Nathan Bedford Forrest and John Hunt Morgan. Both men, under orders from Kirby Smith, lead effective raids against the lines of communication of Buell's army. Forrest repeatedly struck the railroad and destroyed bridges that Buell depended on for resupply. In July, Morgan's men conducted a "thousand-mile raid through Kentucky and middle Tennessee that captured 1,200 prisoners and tons of supplies."[5] With less than 2,500 men these cavalry raids effectively immobilized Buell's army of 40,000. These raids demonstrated the vulnerability of the advancing Union armies. Bragg wrote Beauregard on 22 July "Our cavalry is paving the way for me in Middle Tennessee and Kentucky."[6]

A second military factor would be that a successful Southern invasion would "prevent the [Union] forces from seizing Chattanooga, occupying the principal places in East Tennessee, organizing the Unionists of that region, and severing the railroad communications between Virginia and Georgia."[7]

Finally the state of Kentucky, officially neutral, was seen by the South as a sister slave state awaiting liberation. It was felt that if a strong Confederate showing could be made then thousands of sympathizers would rally to the Southern cause. Bragg believed in this to such an extent, he purchased 15,000 rifles to equip all the sympathizers who would rally to his flag.

Based on these considerations Bragg wrote Richmond on 23 July with an outline of his plan.

> Major General Van Dorn, with about 16,000 effectives will hold the line of the Mississippi. Major General Price, with a similar force, will face the enemy on this frontier, the balance of the forces, some 35,000 effectives, I hope, in conjunction with Major General Smith, to strike an effective blow through Middle Tennessee, gaining the enemy's rear, cutting off his supplies and dividing his forces, so as to encounter him in detail. In any event much will be accomplished in simply preserving our line, and preventing a descent into Georgia, than which no greater disaster could befall us.[8]

This plan did not mention an invasion of Kentucky. At this time, Bragg's goal was the destruction of Buell's army. If he could keep Chattanooga free from enemy threat, while at the same time defeating that enemy, a great victory could be won. Van Dorn and Price would be used to fix the Union forces and prevent their reinforcing Buell. Bragg was depending on joining his forces with Kirby Smith in order to have sufficient force to defeat Buell.

Unfortunately for Bragg, Kirby Smith had other ideas. Kirby Smith kept up a regular correspondence with Davis proposing an invasion, led by himself, of Kentucky. He also kept up regular correspondence with Bragg, but he was not as direct with his desire to invade Kentucky. On July 24 he wrote Bragg, proposing "that Bragg move to Chattanooga and open an offensive campaign with every prospect of regaining possession of Middle Tennessee and possibly Kentucky."[9] In that same dispatch he stated, "I will not only cooperate with you, but will cheerfully place my command under you, subject to your orders."

Unknown to Kirby Smith, Bragg had already started moving his soldiers the two hundred miles from Tupelo to Chattanooga. The infantry divisions were sent by rail to Mobile, Alabama to Atlanta and then to Chatanooga. This journey of almost 800 miles, was the largest Confederate rail movement during the war.

When Bragg arrived at Chattanooga, Kirby Smith came down from Knoxville to confer. By virtue of his rank, Bragg should have automatically assumed control of all forces. "But Bragg, conscious of being in Kirby Smith's official territory, did not like to display too much authority."[10] The results of the conference were a sketchy plan and a pledge to "cooperate". A detailed plan was not worked out.

Bragg reported his impression of the meeting to General Cooper, the Adjutant General of the Confederate Army.

> Maj. Gen. E. Kirby Smith, commanding Department of East Tennessee, met me here yesterday by appointment, and we have arranged measures for mutual support and effective co-operation. As some ten days or two weeks must elapse before my means of transportation will reach here to such an extent as to enable me to take the field with my main force it has been determined that General Smith shall move at once against General Morgan, in front of Cumberland Gap. Should he be successful, and our well grounded hopes be fulfilled, our entire force will then be thrown into Middle Tennessee with the fairest prospect of cutting off General Buell."[11]

Because Bragg failed to impose himself, Kirby Smith came away from the meeting with the "understanding that the commanders would operate independently until the columns united at their objective."[12] Which objective remains unclear. In a letter written after the meeting, Kirby Smith clearly understood

Bragg's aims, "Bragg proposed operating in Middle Tennessee, with Nashville as his objective point."[13] However, Kirby Smith had different plans. Heavily influenced by Morgan's raid into Kentucky and the optimistic reports of 25,000 to 30,000 men waiting to join the Confederate cause, Kirby Smith kept his eyes on invading Kentucky.

Ten days after their meeting in Chattanooga, Kirby Smith wrote a dispatch to Bragg outlining the advantages of an invasion into Kentucky. He was proposing to bypass the large Union force at Cumberland Gap, if it was found impractical to reduce it, and move directly to Lexington.

On 10 August, Bragg acknowledged the possibility of invading Kentucky stating that "I hope to receive [information which] will determine which route a shall take, to Nashville or Lexington. My inclination is now for the latter."[14] Bragg ended his dispatch to Kirby Smith telling him to not "move far into Kentucky" and to wait until Bragg's forces could move against Buell.

While writing Bragg that he would support Bragg's advance, Kirby Smith was asking Davis's permission to move directly against Lexington. After receiving encouragement from Davis, Kirby Smith's troops left Knoxville on 14 August.

Bragg's army did not move north until two weeks later. In the mean time, Kirby Smith's move into Kentucky was extremely successful. He bypassed Cumberland Gap, leaving behind a division to watch the Union force. Kirby Smith moved north, overwhelming the unprepared Union garrisons and taking Richmond, Kentucky on 30 August and Lexington on 2 September.

Bragg's army started moving north on 28 August. The final decision had been made the day before: not to move into Middle Tennessee; not to move against Buell's army; but to move into Kentucky and unite with Kirby Smith, and perhaps move on Cincinnati. The decision was based on the success that Kirby Smith had as he moved north towards Lexington.

Under these inauspicious beginnings Bragg's invasion was doomed from the beginning. Bragg's army of 30,000 moved north towards the Union supply point, Louisville. Buell, reinforced to 55,000, was forced to backtrack in order to prevent Bragg from interdicting his supplies. By 17 September Bragg was able to position his army between the advancing Buell and Louisville. He sent word for Kirby Smith to join him in an attack against Buell.

However, Kirby Smith had no intention of linking up with Bragg. Buell was able to bypass Bragg and move to Lexington. Bragg was forced to move closer to Kirby Smith, in hopes of conducting a link up at Bardstown, Kentucky. Only by fighting together could the two Confederate armies hope to fight the decisive battle for Kentucky. On 1 October, Bragg went to visit Kirby Smith and, instead of insisting on joining the forces together, the two commanding generals attended the inaugeration of the new Confederate govenor.

The 4 October ceremony was "rudely interupted by the booming of advancing Union artillery."[15] Buell had split his forces, sending one division to hold Kirby Smith's army while the rest moved against Bragg's army at Bardstown. The resulting fighting

was confusing as the outnumbered Confederates retreated, and then retreated again after a battle at Perryville on October 8.

Also on 4 October, the suppporting attacks by Van Dorn and Price ended in failure at Corinth, Mississippi. Under Bragg's plan these two generals were "to advance simultaneously with us from Mississippi on West Tennessee"[16]. The purpose of this was to prevent further reinforcement of Buell. Price took heed to Bragg's orders, but Van Dorn had his own plan for invading western Kentucky and, as the senior general, refused to cooperate with Price. The resulting action was a defeat, by Grant, of Price at Iuka on 19 September. After the Iuka defeat the two armies joined together, under the command of Van Dorn. In a hurried effort, Van Dorn led the two armies on an attack of "weakly" defended Corinth. After intial success, the Confederates ran into defenses designed by U.S. Grant and were forced to withdraw.

After the battle of Perryville, the last battle in Bragg's invasion of Kentucky, he finally joined up with Kirby Smith's army. It was too late. His campaign to reclaim Tennessee, liberate Kentucky, and to defeat Buell had ended. His supporting attacks had been defeated and there was no volunteers for his army from Kentucky. Bragg ordered his army to return to Chattanooga.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF THE CAMPAIGN

Operational art is defined by Army Field Manual 100-5 Operations as "the employment of military forces to attain strategic goals in a theater of war or theater of operations through the design, organization, and conduct of campaigns and major operations." Braxton Bragg was in the ideal position to practice operational art during his invasion of Kentucky in 1862.

Unfortunately, neither he nor any of his peers were prepared for the responsibilities of conducting campaign planning. As with many of the general officers in the Civil War, Bragg was a West Point graduate, with experience in the Mexican War as a company grade officer. He had no previous experience in planning for large forces. The size of the entire United States Army, prior to the Civil War, was 16,000 troops. Within six months after being promoted to major general, Bragg had the responsibility of planning an invasion involving over 80,000 men. Perhaps with the aid of FM 100-5 he might have been more successful.

FM 100-5, in reducing operational art to its essentials, requires the commander to answer three questions:

> (1) What military condition must be produced in the theater of war or operations to achieve the strategic goal?
>
> (2) What sequence of actions is most likely to produce that condition?

(3) How should the resources of the force be applied to accomplish that sequence of actions?

The answer to the first question requires Bragg to determine his strategic goal. Upon taking command of the army, he spent a lot of effort rebuilding the army's morale and fighting capability. Operating without any strategic guidance from the government, he was determined to restore his army as a fighting force. Preoccupied with the condition of his army, his initial evaluation of the situation was short term. He realized the large army of Buell, operating in Tennessee with supply lines reaching back to Louisville, was the major threat. His first strategic goal was, then, to protect Chattanooga and to free Middle Tennessee.

Bragg in a letter to the Adjutant General on 23 July, outlined the sequence of actions that he thought was most likely to produce the defeat of Buell in Tennessee. "I hope...to strike an effective blow through Middle Tennessee, gaining the enemy's rear, cutting off his supplies and dividing his forces, so as to encounter him in detail."[1] FM 100-5 states that the commander must specify how the enemy is to be defeated and that the chosen method must be attainable. In this case Bragg's reasoning is sound and given sound execution, attainable.

The final question regarding the application of resources was also addressed by Bragg. Thinking that he would be able to control the actions of all the forces in the west, he was going to use Price and Van Dorn, to fix Union forces that could reinforce Buell, and then combine with Kirby Smith to divide and conquer Buell.

To Bragg's credit, this plan focuses on the Union center of gravity, the army of 40,000 commanded by Buell. However, the plan was really based upon a short term goal that should have been part of a larger campaign plan. Proper campaign planning focuses on long term goals. A plan to free middle Tennessee, did not address the situation in Kentucky or the Union possession of western Tennessee.

Regardless of Bragg's ability to plan, the major impediment to executing the plan became the failure to establish unity of command. This major shortcoming, one that was never addressed, ensured that Bragg's plans were doomed. Bragg made his plans, using the forces of other generals, based on the concept of cooperation. "Cooperation" was not a recognized military term in the Civil War, any more than it is today. Bragg's aversion to asserting command over other generals, depending instead on gentlemanly virtues, ended with predictable results. Kirby Smith and Van Dorn had command of separate departments, and were technically answerable only to Richmond. Throughout this campaign, both men were in contact with Jefferson Davis and other members of the War Department, pursuing their own agendas. Bragg's plans were not their plans.

The changes in the original campaign plan were due more to Bragg's accommodation of Kirby Smith, than to any new insight by Bragg. Kirby Smith had been badgering Davis to effect the invasion of Kentucky. Because Kentucky was a border state, with sizable Southern sentiment, it had always been a political objective to draw it back into the Confederacy. For this reason

Davis supported moving into Kentucky in his letters to Kirby Smith. With Davis's encouragement, Kirby Smith had no incentive to follow Bragg's lead into Tennessee.

During their first conference on 31 July, at Chattanooga, Bragg was still following his original plan, even though Kirby Smith got him to approve a supporting attack into Kentucky to remove the Union force at Cumberland Gap. The plan, to Bragg, remained essentially the same: let Kirby Smith clear Cumberland Gap and then the two armies, united, could move into Tennessee.

Kirby Smith felt no obligation to Bragg's invasion and soon switched his focus solely to Kentucky. Influenced by the successful Cavalry raids of Morgan and misleading reports "of eager volunteers...waiting to double the size of his army"[2] Kirby Smith changed his objective to liberating Kentucky. Bragg, in turn, was influenced by Kirby Smith and he began to change the focus of the entire campaign.

The strategic goals of the campaign were now widened to include the liberation and control of Kentucky. The original goal of protecting Chattanooga and freeing Middle Tennessee had not changed. Bragg still intended to strike into Tennessee and defeat Buell's army. Bragg's focus was always on Buell's army. The defeat of this army in Tennessee or Kentucky could accomplish all his goals. But the need for the two armies to combine was essential to Bragg. Without Kirby Smith's army Bragg was not willing to take on Buell. For this reason he wrote Kirby Smith to state he was considering a move into Kentucky.

Bragg's new plan was overly ambitious. It now required Van Dorn and Price to advance into West Tennessee, in support of his attack into Middle Tennessee or Kentucky. In expanding his strategic goals Bragg was biting off more than he could chew with the forces available.

Van Dorn and Price did not have the troops available, even when they joined together, to conduct offensive operations in West Tennessee. The Union forces had the capability to muster a greater number of troops even in the worst case scenario. By giving them an offensive mission for which they were not equipped they had no chance for success. Especially considering that their foe was not a timid Union general, but U.S. Grant. Compounding the problem was that Van Dorn did not take orders from Bragg. He was in contact with Davis outlining his plan to liberate New Orleans. The change in mission for Van Dorn and Price was a mistake.

The final change in Bragg's campaign was forced by the action's of Kirby Smith. In the last dispatch to Bragg, before he moved his troops north, Kirby Smith wrote "I will remain in position in his rear [Cumberland Gap] until you think I can move rapidly on Lexington."[3] The facts show that Kirby Smith did not wait for any word from Bragg, but bypassed Cumberland Gap, and moved straight to Lexington. Although Kirby Smith deliberately mislead Bragg, part of the blame can be laid on Bragg. The two men were in constant contact with one another, and, while Kirby Smith mislead Bragg as to his future intentions, he always reported his current situation correctly.

The dispatches must have been a continuous source of surprise to Bragg.

Bragg should have taken the time to give direct orders to his subordinate and make him comply. Instead, he acknowledged Kirby Smith's movements and gave him encouragement and vague ideas on his future plans.

The strategic goals of the final plan remained the same: defend Chattanooga, free Middle Tennessee, and liberate Kentucky. The sequence of actions was now changed to forego the strike into Tennessee and replace it with a move into Kentucky. This looked like a good decision.

The Union policy was such that they did not forage but relied on the railroads to bring them all their supplies. Louisville was the central base for the Union resupply effort. By moving towards Louisville, Bragg would pose a grave threat to Buell's army, as well as the rest of the Northern armies serving in the West. His move north would require a move north by Buell. Bragg could force the evacuation of Tennessee, without firing a shot. This is in fact what happened.

The evacuation of middle Tennessee and the defense of Chattanooga could be accomplished, at least temporarily, by Bragg's move into Kentucky. But to effect long term gains and to free Kentucky, Bragg would have to defeat Buell's army.

Unfortunately, there were no additional troops available to Bragg to accomplish his new sequence of actions. Van Dorn and Price were still outnumbered by Grant. And Buell's 46,000 men were equal to the combined strength of Bragg and Kirby Smith.

An additional 80,000 raw recruits were available to the Union in Louisville and Cincinnati. If Bragg was able to defeat Buell in battle and liberate Kentucky, he did not have enough men to hold it. In reality, he had enough men to conduct a large raid.

Three factors led Bragg to make his final campaign decision. One, Kirby Smith was moving north, and Bragg knew that only by joining together did they have a chance. Two, he underestimated the Union forces, both in numbers and fighting capability, and finally he thought that thousands of repressed Kentucky volunteers would swell the size of his army.

In the first case, Bragg was letting events make his decisions, instead of taking action to make events. His subordinate had taken the initiative from him. Rather than planning, Bragg was reacting. The last two points show that Bragg was making decisions based on poor intelligence. What Bragg thought were reasonable assumptions about his enemy, were in fact an underestimation of their abilities. And the Confederates overestimated the response they would receive in the border states. The men sympathetic to the South had already enlisted.

Bragg's planning failed to include contingency plans. His over optimistic planning had led him to believe that continuing the invasion into Ohio would be the logical conclusion of the invasion. Plans based on alternate outcomes to some of his basic assumptions were not developed. When the thousands of sympathizers failed to materialize, Bragg was forced to consider halting the entire offensive. When Van Dorn and Price were

stopped at Corinth, he had no alternatives for them. Perhaps they could have supported Bragg with raids or feints.

In the execution phase of his plan Bragg failed to attack Buell's army when he had the chance. Bragg was in position to defeat Buell below Munfordsville in late September. But wanting to ensure he had sufficient forces he moved closer to Kirby Smith setting the stage for the final failure.

Throughout the planning for the campaign Bragg remained focused on Buell's army. But Bragg never took direct steps to confront Buell. He was consumed with the idea of uniting with Kirby Smith before taking any action. And Kirby Smith was consumed with taking his own action in Kentucky, independent of Bragg. Bragg failed to decide upon a sequence of actions to achieve the military condition of defeating Buell's army. His constant alterations to his plan resulted in sluggish execution. However, even with better execution, Bragg did not have the resources to achieve anything more than temporary success. Bragg could not generate the combat power to sustain a presence in Tennessee and Kentucky. Bragg's defeat in Kentucky, combined with Lee's defeat at Antietam marked the end of the "golden hour" of the Confederacy.

CHAPTER V

LESSONS LEARNED

The benefits gained from studying history comes from the future application of the lessons learned. The analysis of Bragg's campaign to invade Kentucky in 1862 shows four major shortcomings in Bragg's planning process. First, there was no strategic guidance from the Confederate National Command Authority. Second, Bragg failed to establish unity of command. Third, he never understood the relationship of means to ends. This caused Bragg to choose inappropriate goals. And finally, he failed to establish a definite, comprehensive plan.

The basis for all campaign planning comes from what strategic goal must be accomplished. The guidance for this must come from the political leadership. Jefferson Davis's poor organization of the Confederate War Department contributed to the lack of guidance available to the commanders in the field. In the first twenty months of the Civil War, the South had four Secretaries of War. General Cooper, the ranking Confederate general and Adjutant General was considered an incompetent bureaucrat. The military adviser, Robert E. Lee, had been given command of an army in June. And despite a high opinion of his own military prowess, Davis was loath to give firm guidance to his departmental commanders.

The Confederacy had four legitimate goals in the summer of

1862. Recognition by European countries, drawing the border states into the Confederacy, demonstrating the will of the Southern people, and affecting the elections of 1862. None of these were transmitted to Bragg. All Bragg received for strategic guidance was to conduct an offensive as soon as the opportunity presents. The purpose behind the offensive was left for Bragg to determine. The military commander must have an understanding of the purpose of his actions. Without that understanding he will be wasting his time and efforts.

Bragg's failure to establish unity of command was a violation of one of the Principles of War. Blame must also be shared by Jefferson Davis. His system of independent commanders set the stage for Bragg's troubles. Bragg could have overcome this arrangement by asking Davis to make him the overall commander, as he originally thought he was. Or he should have asserted himself as the ranking general in the theater.

In today's world, military operations are by their joint nature far more complex. The command structures can be difficult to establish. To ensure success, all efforts must be made under one commander. As operations as recent as Grenada demonstrate, failure to establish unity of command can still foul up military operations.

Bragg did not understand the correlation of means to ends. If he had been able to deal decisively with Buell's army, what was his next step? He issued orders indicating that all his armies would "unite in Ohio." He never considers what the actions of the 60,000 Union soldiers in Western Tennessee or

the 80,000 in Louisville and Cincinnati might be. How was Bragg going to defend the new gains in Kentucky or Tennessee? Splitting the troops he had available to garrison important railroad centers or supply depots would expose them to defeat in detail, in numerous separate actions.

Bragg's forces were much more suited to large raids than to an offensive designed to conquer territory. Bragg's forces were not suitable to accomplish his long term goals. Today we must guard against the same over confidence which leads to inappropriate objectives for the available forces. A realistic assessment of capabilities, friendly and enemy, will help prevent this type of mistake.

The final failing of Bragg was his inability to establish a plan and insist on its execution. His planning process was driven by the actions of a subordinate. Kirby Smith's designs on Kentucky forced Bragg to change his plan twice. The final change came the day before his troops moved north to start the invasion. Bragg was literally outside the decision cycle. For all his flexibility in changing his plans to meet his subordinates actions, he included no contingency plans. Planning with a view to un-impeded success leads to failure.

A headquarters responsible for the conduct of a campaign must plan for numerous contingencies; however, their planning cannot be driven by the actions of subordinate commands not following the general plan. Unity of command and purpose are interrelated. Success, in military operations today or in the Civil War depend on good plans and faithful execution of those plans.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

The study of Bragg's invasion of Kentucky reveals lessons that are still important today. Although operating in a simple enviornment compared to the complexity of today's joint operations the lessons remain relevant. At the outset of the campaign, Bragg had an opportunity to create a favorable outcome for the Confederate and perhaps alter the course of the war. However, without any strategic guidance, Bragg's offensive had no specific long term purpose. Failure to establish unity of command, prevented Bragg meeting even his short term objectives. Even an excellent campaign would have been ruined by the failure to establish a single chain of command. The means chosen to accomplish the defeat of Buell's army and the liberation of Middle Tennessee and Kentucky were not appropriate. The focus on short term objectives led to an invasion that could not destroy an opposing army and hold all the regained territory. Finally, Bragg was not forceful enough in the planning, allowing subordinates to dictate the course of events. Military planners must maintain a big picture, knowing where they fit in the action. Then they must take steps that all planned actions lead to the proper end, and not some personal agenda. By understanding the failures of previous campaign planners, we can avoid the mistakes of history.

NOTES

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4. James M. McPherson, Battle Cry of Freedom (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 416.

5. Ibid, p. 417.

6. Elizabeth Cutting, Jefferson Davis: Political Soldier (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1930), p. 199.

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2. Eaton, p. 247.

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10. Stanley F. Horn, The Army of Tennessee (New York: The Bobbs-Merril Company, 1941), p. 162.

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2. Foote, p. 577.

3. Connelly, p. 223.

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